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20 AUG 1964

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Effect of Using OXCART 121 for Speed  
Record Attempt

1. You have asked DD/S&T to examine the possibility of using OXCART No. 121 to establish a world's speed record, in lieu of the recently cancelled use of the interceptor version, and to estimate the impact of such a utilization on our priority program to establish an early operational capability at Mach 2.8 (SKYLARK) with the basic OXCART reconnaissance version. Our conclusion is that it is not wise to use 121 for this purpose at this time for the following reasons.

2. We reckon that the speed trial would take 121 out of our flight test program for three to four weeks. This represents 10 to 12 lost flight tests which are valuable in an ancillary reliability and repeatability support role in qualifying the operational vehicles for sustained Mach 2.8 flight and the eventual 3.2 capability.

3. Because No. 121 is a unique aircraft, in terms of its test instrumentation, we are frankly apprehensive about committing it to a flying program which is not essential to establishing the over-all OXCART capability. Although we cannot say that flying for a speed trial is riskier than making the requisite flight tests for OXCART, we would be liable to severe criticism if 121 were to be lost while attempting such a record at a time when it was uniquely important to our major goal.

4. We have reluctantly gone along with the previous A-11 and SR-21 surfacing in the hope that the public story would start with these two seater aircraft, leaving us the

  
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possibility of keeping the 10 single place planes [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] If we now enter one of the genuine OXCART aircraft in a speed run, it will be easily recognized as distinct (see below) and as an additional aircraft to three now at Edwards. The whole question of its source and companions will then arise, stripping off both our residual security and labeling the DOD claim of a new aircraft development for what it really is.

5. There are firm requirements for certifying a world speed record, which will guarantee the disclosure of the OXCART technical features in a way that we find unacceptable. These trials are conducted by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI) in Paris, working through the U. S. National Aeronautic Association (NAA). However, it is possible that foreign nationals could and would insist on taking part in such a test. Specifically, the FAI/NAA representatives must:

- a. Inspect the aircraft on behalf of the FAI and report to them.
- b. Certify the takeoff and landing.
- c. Validate the photo panel and/or barograph installation used for test purposes.
- d. Certify positive radar and optical tracking during the test runs.

All in all, we will retain very little security for OXCART as an operational vehicle if we sign up for this event.

6. If we are to establish an OXCART operational reconnaissance capability with as much security as is left to us now as soon as possible, we must oppose the use of aircraft 121 for this purpose.

(Signed) Jack C. Ledford

Approved:

*Albert D. Wheelon*  
ALBERT D. WHEELON, DD/S&T

JACK C. LEDFORD  
Colonel USAF  
Assistant Director  
(Special Activities)

cc: DDCI

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